

## CLAIMS

We claim:

- 1 1. A method of creating an animated entity for delivering a multi-media message  
2 from a sender to a recipient, the method comprising:  
3 receiving from the sender an image file to a server, the image file having  
4 associated sender-assigned name, gender, category and indexing information;  
5 presenting to the sender the image file and a choice of a generic face model  
6 template from a plurality of generic face model templates;  
7 after the sender chooses a generic face model template, presenting the image file  
8 and the selected model template to the sender and requesting the sender to mark features  
9 on the image file;  
10 after the sender marks the image file, presenting to the sender a preview of at  
11 least one expression associated with the marked image file;  
12 if the sender does not accept the image file after the preview, presenting again the  
13 image file and selected model template for the sender to redo or add marked features on  
14 the image file;  
15 if the sender accepts the image file after the preview, presenting the image file as  
16 an optional animated entity when the sender chooses an animated entity to deliver a  
17 multi-media message.
- 1 2. The method of creating an animated entity of claim 1, wherein the category  
2 information relates to whether the animated entity will be generally available or only  
3 available for the sender, and the indexing information relates to enabling the animated  
4 entity to be in a searchable database.
- 1 3. The method of creating an animated entity of claim 1, wherein gender  
2 information relates to a default gender of a voice associated with the animated entity.

1 4. The method of creating an animated entity of claim 1, wherein presenting the  
2 image file and the selected model template to the sender and requesting the sender to  
3 mark features on the image file further comprises instructing the sender to mark points  
4 on the image file by indicating a corresponding point on the selected model template.

1 5. The method of creating an animated entity of claim 4, further comprising  
2 presenting the image file and the selected model template to the sender and instructing  
3 the sender to mark points on the image file corresponding to highlighted points on the  
4 selected model template until a threshold number of points on the image file have been  
5 marked by the sender.

1 6. The method of creating an animated entity of claim 5, further comprising:  
2 after reaching the threshold number of points on the image file, presenting the  
3 sender an option to mark additional points;  
4 if the sender chooses to mark additional points, presenting the image file and the  
5 selected modal template to the sender and instructing the sender to mark additional  
6 points on the image file corresponding to highlighted points on the selected model  
7 template until a maximum number of points on the image file have been marked by the  
8 sender; and  
9 if the sender chooses not to mark additional points, continuing to the step of  
10 presenting a preview of the image file.

1 7. The method of creating an animated entity of claim 1, further comprising:  
2 presenting the sender with an option to choose textures for teeth, eyes and a  
3 tongue.

1 8. The method of creating an animated entity of claim 7, wherein after the sender  
2 chooses textures for teeth, eyes and the tongue, the chosen textures are added to the  
3 image file for use in the animated entity.

1 9. The method of creating an animated entity of claim 1, further comprising  
2 presenting the sender with an option to choose different teeth from a group of teeth for  
3 the animated entity.

1 10. The method of creating an animated entity of claim 1, further comprising:  
2 presenting the sender with an option to choose aging effects associated with the  
3 animated entity; and  
4 using the chosen aging effect, modifying the image file to increase or decrease the  
5 appearance of the age of the image file according to the option chosen by the sender.

1 11. The method of creating an animated entity of claim 1, further comprising:  
2 presenting the sender with an option to modify the appearance of the weight of  
3 the animated entity; and  
4 using the chosen weight by the sender, modifying the image file to increase or  
5 decrease the appearance of the weight of the animated entity according to the option  
6 chosen by the sender.

1 12. A method of enabling a sender to create an animated entity for delivering a multi-  
2 media message from the sender to a recipient, the animated entity arranged to deliver a  
3 text message from the sender, the method comprising:  
4 receiving from the sender an image file at a server;  
5 presenting to the sender the image file and at least one generic face model  
6 templates with an option to choose one of the at least one generic face model templates  
7 to assist in marking the image file; and  
8 after the sender selects one of the at least one generic face model templates,  
9 presenting the image file and the selected model template to the sender and requesting  
10 the sender to mark features on the image file associated with features on the selected  
11 model template highlighted in succession.

1 13. The method of enabling a sender to create an animated entity for delivering a  
2 multi-media message from the sender to a recipient of claim 12, further comprising:  
3 after the sender marks the image file, presenting to the sender a preview of at  
4 least one expression associated with the marked image file;  
5 if the user does not accept the image file after the preview, presenting again the  
6 image file and selected model template for the sender to redo or add marked features on  
7 the image file; and  
8 if the user accepts the image file after the preview, presenting the image file as an  
9 optional animated entity when the sender chooses an animated entity to deliver a multi-  
10 media message.

1 14. The method of enabling a sender to create an animated entity for delivering a  
2 multi-media message from the sender to a recipient of claim 12, further comprising:  
3 presenting the sender with options to modify a texture of teeth, eyes and/or  
4 tongue.

1 15. The method of enabling a sender to create an animated entity for delivering a  
2 multi-media message from the sender to a recipient of claim 12, further comprising:  
3 presenting the sender with options to modify a parameter associated with the  
4 appearance of weight for the image file.

1 16. A method of enabling a sender to create a multi-media message to a recipient, the  
2 multi-media message comprising a dialogue between at least two animated entities  
3 arranged to deliver respective portions of a text message from the sender, the method  
4 comprising:  
5 presenting the sender with an option to choose at least two animated entities to  
6 deliver respective portions of a text message to the recipient, the choice of which  
7 animated entity to deliver which portion of the text message being effected by the

insertion in the text message of an indicator associated with the chosen animated entity;  
and

delivering the multi-media message where the chosen animated entities deliver  
respective portions of the text message according to a position in the text message of the  
indicator associated with the animated entity.

17. A method of enabling a sender to create a multi-media message to a recipient, the  
multi-media message comprising a dialogue between at least two animated entities  
arranged to deliver respective portions of a text message from the sender, the method  
comprising:

receiving from the sender a text message comprising an indicator of a first  
animated entity and text associated with the first animated entity, and an indicator of a  
second animated entity and text associated with the second animated entity; and  
delivering the multi-media message wherein the first animated entity delivers the  
text associated with the first animated entity and wherein the second animated entity  
delivers the text associated with the second animated entity.

18. The method of enabling a sender to create a multi-media message to a recipient  
of claim 17, further comprising:

receiving in the text message sender emoticons; and  
delivering the multi-media message using the emoticons wherein each emoticon  
is associated with a most immediately preceding animated entity indicator within the text  
message.

19. The method of enabling a sender to create a multi-media message to a recipient  
of claim 17, further comprising:

providing the sender with options to control the position of each animated entity  
chosen within the multi-media message.

1 20. A method of enabling sender customization of an animated entity for use in  
2 delivering a multi-media message, the method comprising, over the Internet:  
3 receiving from the sender an image of an entity to be used as the animated entity;  
4 requesting the sender to mark a plurality of facial features on the entity and  
5 receiving facial features marked by the sender;  
6 computing a customized model associated with the entity; and  
7 storing the customized model in a private database for restricted access by the  
8 sender.

1 21. The method of enabling sender customization of an animated entity for use in  
2 delivering a multi-media message of claim 20, the method further comprising:  
3 after computing the customized model associated with entity, displaying at least  
4 one facial expression to the sender of the customized model.

1 22. The method of enabling sender customization of an animated entity for use in  
2 delivering a multi-media message of claim 21, the method further comprising:  
3 after displaying at least one facial expression to the sender of the customized  
4 model, presenting the sender with an option to change a magnitude associated with each  
5 displayed facial expression.

1 23. The method of enabling sender customization of an animated entity for use in  
2 delivering a multi-media message of claim 20, wherein requesting the sender to mark a  
3 plurality of facial features on the entity further comprises requesting the sender to mark  
4 facial features associated with eye corners, eye lids, nose, mouth corners, lip boundaries,  
5 and hair outline.

1 24. A method of enabling sender customization over the Internet of an animated  
2 entity used for delivering a multi-media message, the method comprising:  
3 receiving from the sender an image of an entity to be used as the animated entity;

requesting the sender to mark a plurality of facial features on the entity and in response, receiving facial features marked by the sender;

computing a customized model associated with the entity;

presenting a proof-animated entity to the sender based on the customized model;

and

if approved by the sender, storing the customized model in a private database for restricted access by the sender.

25. A method of creating an animated entity for delivering a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient, the method comprising:

receiving from the sender an image file to a server, the image file having associated sender-assigned name, gender, category and indexing information;

presenting to the sender the image file and requesting the sender to mark features on the image file;

presenting the sender with an option to select a voice for the animated entity; and

associating the selected voice with the animated entity for use in delivering the multi-media message.

26. A method of creating an animated entity for delivering a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient, the method comprising:

receiving from the sender an image file, the image file having associated sender-assigned parameters and a default voice;

presenting to the sender the image file and requesting the sender to mark features on the image file;

presenting the sender with an option to modify the default voice for the animated entity; and

if the sender selects a voice different from the default voice, associating the selected voice with the animated entity for use in delivering the multi-media message.

1 27. A method of creating an animated entity for delivering a multi-media message  
2 from a sender to a recipient, the method comprising:  
3 receiving from the sender an image file;  
4 presenting the sender an option to zoom the image file;  
5 if the sender selects to zoom the image file, presenting the sender with a zoomed  
6 image file;  
7 requesting the sender to mark features on the image file in preparation for  
8 creating an animated entity from the image file; and  
9 presenting the image file as an optional animated entity when the sender chooses  
10 an animated entity to deliver a multi-media message.

1 28. The method of creating an animated entity for delivering a multi-media message  
2 from a sender to a recipient of claim 27, wherein presenting the image file as an optional  
3 animated entity further comprises presenting the sender with the following background  
4 choices for the selected animated entity:

5 (1) a predefined background, wherein the animated entity is automatically scaled  
6 to fill the frame of the window in which it is presented;

7 (2) a background associated with the received image file, wherein the animated  
8 entity has the same size as in the image file; and

9 (3) if the sender selects to zoom the image file, the zoomed image file as the  
10 background, wherein the animated entity is presented with the size as given in the  
11 zoomed image file.

1 29. A method of creating a personal animated entity for delivering a multi-media  
2 message from a sender to a recipient using a received image file from the sender, the  
3 method comprising:

4 presenting the sender an option to zoom the image file;



5 if the sender selects to zoom the image file, presenting the sender with a zoomed  
6 image file and requesting the sender to mark features associated with the personal  
7 animated entity in the image file in preparation for creating the personal animated entity;  
8 and, when the personal animated entity is prepared,  
9 presenting the personal animated entity as selectable entity by the sender as an to  
10 deliver the multi-media message.

1 30. The method of creating a personal animated entity for delivering a multi-media  
2 message from a sender to a recipient of claim 29, wherein presenting the selectable  
3 personal animated entity further comprises presenting the sender with an option to select  
4 a predefined background, wherein the personal animated entity is automatically scaled to  
5 fill a window in which it is presented.

1 31. The method of creating a personal animated entity for delivering a multi-media  
2 message from a sender to a recipient of claim 30, wherein presenting the selectable  
3 personal animated entity further comprises presenting the sender with an option to select  
4 a background associated with the received image file, wherein the personal animated  
5 entity has the same size as in the image file.

1 32. The method of creating a personal animated entity for delivering a multi-media  
2 message from a sender to a recipient of claim 31, wherein presenting the selectable  
3 personal animated entity further comprises presenting the sender with an option, if the  
4 sender selected to zoom the image file, to choose the zoomed image file as the  
5 background, wherein the personal animated entity is presented with the size as given in  
6 the zoomed image file.